

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 162459

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 162459

AFDROUGHT PARIS FOR HELMAN

FOLLOWING REPEAT COTONOU 970 ACTION SECSTATE ABIDJAN INFO

BAMAKO NIAMEY ROME DATED 8 JUL 75

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 970

AIDAC

ROME FOR FODAG

EO 11652: GDS

SUBJ: COTONOU/GAO SHIPMENTS

REF COTONOU 949

1. OUR GAO RELIEF SHIPMENTS FACE POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES AS
RESULT OF SURREPTITIOUS DEPARTURE FROM DAHOMEY OF ALL THREE
EXPATRIATES CONSTITUTING SENIOR MANAGEMENT OF SOCOPAO/DAHOMEY
(MAUBLANC, TOSCANI AND THE FIRM'S ACCOUNT) LAST WEEKEND.
DAHOMEAN GOVT HAD WARNED SOCOPAO EBYATRIATE PERSONNEL AGAINST
LEAVING DAHOMEY IN VIEW OF COMPANY'S CONSIDERABLE OUTSTANDING
DEBTS. SEVERAL OF SOCOPAO'S TOP DAHOMEAN EMPLOYEES REPORTEDLY
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PAGE 02 STATE 162459

IN CUSTODY OF NATIONAL SECURITY AUTHORITIES.

2. ABRUP DEPARTURE PROBABLY LINKED TO RECENTLY DETERIORATING RELATIONS BETWEEN OCDN AND SOCOPAO AS RESULT OF APPROXIMATELY 1 BILLION CFA (400 MILLION DEBTS PLUS 600 MILLION FINES) OWED TO OCDN BY SOCOPAO. IN MEETING REPORTED REFTEL, OCDN DIR DOREGO ANGRILY ACCUSED SOCOPAO OF BEING 950 MILLION CFA IN ARREAS IN PAYMENTS DUE TO RAILROAD FOR COMMODITIES ALREADY SHIPPED. DOREGO TOLD SOCOPAO THAT IN FUTURE OCDN WOULD REQUIRE PAYMENT ON WEEKLY BASIS.

3. SS HELENE ROTH NOW SCHEDULED DOCK COTONOU 8 JULY AND SS DELTA PARAGUAY ON 9 JULY. SOCOPAO HAS CONTRACT TO HANDLE SORGHUM ON BOARD HELEN ROTH WHILE SACOTRA HAS CONTRACT SIGNED JULY 5 FOR DELTA PARAGUAY. WFP REP PEARSON FEARS THAT MRGD MAY CONSIDER SEIZING OR BLOCKING MOVEMENT OF CARGO CONSIGNMENT TO SOCOPAO IN PORT UNTIL SITUATION CLARIFIES. THIS COULD INCLUDE 1250 MT SORGHUM NOW ON DOCKS AS WELL AS SORGHUM ON BOARD SS HELEN ROTH. EMBASSY DOUBTS DAHOMEAN GOVT WOULD SEIZE ANY USG FOOD FOR SAHEL RELIEF, AND IF IT DID, BELIEVE WE WOULD HAVE LITTLE DIFFICULTY SECURING ITS RELEASE. WE OF COURSE PREPARED TO MAKE WATEVER DEMARCHE MAY BE NECESSARY.

4. SOCOPAO CONTINUES TO FUNCTION FOR TIME BEING, AND THEIR PORT MANAGER HAS ASSURED US HE WILL SEE THAT THE HELEN ROTH IS UNLOADED. THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENTAL FREIGHT FORWARDER (NITRA) MAY BE ASKED TO TAKE OVER GOODS DESTINED FOR NIGER. THE COMPANY'S DAHOMEAN CREDITORS (OCDN, CUSTOMS AND THE PORT) HAVE REPORTEDLY AGREED TO GIVE SOCOPAO SIX MONTHS TO ARRANGE ITS AFFAIRS PRESUMABLY IN ORDER TO COLLECT ON THEIR DEBTS, BUT SOCOPAO UNLIKELY TO OPERATE VERY WELL WITHOUT TOP MANAGEMENT.

5. IN VIEW OF UNCERTAINTY OF SOCOPAO'S SITUATION AND ABSENCE OF MANAGEMENT-LEVEL PERSONNEL, CONTRACT FOR 2300 MT SORGHUM EXPECTED JULY 20 WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY HAVE TO BE AWARDED TO ANOTHER FREIGHT FORWARDER.

6. FOR NEVIN, REDSO/ABIDJAN: FOR PURPOSE OF CONTINGENCY PLANNING IN THE EVENT THAT SOCOPAO PROVES UNABLE TO MOVE OUR SUPPLIES, IS THERE POSSIBILITY OF VOIDING CONTRACT WITH

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PAGE 03 STATE 162459

SOCOPAO FOR SORGHUM ON HELEN ROTH AND/OR SORGHUM ALREADY LANDED FROM DEL SOL AND TRANSFERRING THE CONTRACT TO SACOTRA?
ENGLE
UNQUOTE
INGERSOLL

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